

# STICKY FLOOR PHENOMENON IN WOMEN'S CAREER

Ayu Puspitasari<sup>1</sup>, Suharnomo<sup>2</sup>

Department Economic and Bussines,  
Diponegoro University, Semarang, Indonesia

## Abstract

The phenomenon of women on workforce has become a common thing to be discussed in this era. It can be seen that the number of women in the workforce has been continues to increase. Nevertheless, the number of women in top hierarchy are still very rare. This condition might be caused by sticky floor phenomenon - invisible barrier that cause women's careers to be hampered. This study aims to explore how the sticky floor phenomenon in women's careers.

This study using qualitative method with case study approach. The research data were obtained through in depth interviews with six women in of which 3 worked in banks and 3 in the government organization and consist of single, married without children, married have children. This study found that this study found that sticky floor will be increasingly felt when women are married and have children. But naming sticky floor in Indonesia cannot be done because the woman does make her choice in career voluntarily and with an underlying point of view so that even though sticky floor theory in the west is a barrier but in Indonesia it cannot be called a barrier.

## Keywords

Sticky Floor, Career advancement, Career obstacles, Women Career

## I. Introduction

Reach a career to the highest hierarchy is probably a dream for everyone. But for a woman to be able to pursue a career to the highest hierarchy is still a difficult obstacle. A career woman still has to face internal and external obstacles. At this time even the amount women in the workforce today far greater than before the end of World War II when less than one third women work outside the house[1]. But the higher strata of career ladders and

occupational hierarchies continue to be dominated by men in most countries [2][3][4].

Although the gender gap in education participation and the labor market has been greatly reduced or even reversed in some cases sex segregation in the workforce seems to be stronger. One study has shown that women do not have to face the so-called glass ceiling but sticky floor[5]. Sticky Floor is an obstacle that began at the beginning of his career, why is it called sticky floor because if seen from the philosophy is when women start entering the career world when their feet step on the career floor, as if their feet are stuck and sticky so it is difficult to move forward.

Obstacles at the beginning of a career are important because they can spread to the next career phase (eventually contributing to the glass ceiling). Bjerk [6] argues that early career deferment can cause many women not to have enough time to develop a record of success at mid-level jobs to be promoted to top jobs in the economy. Similarly, Irene Dorner, CEO of HSBC USA who blames the scarcity of women in the upper echelon of finance refers to the sticky floor phenomenon, where women do not actively pursue leadership [7]. Unlike the glass ceiling, which implies that women rising to relatively high levels will find a barrier that is difficult to penetrate, sticky floor implies weaker barriers to women's progress and more likely some women may be able to withdraw from the floor to reach more positions high [8].

But we also cannot turn a close eye that there are some women who have begun to climb the ladder of their careers and occupy the highest position. Based on a survey conducted by the World Economic Forum in 2015, only 5.4% of women in top management positions. This was also reinforced by the best CEO award from Indonesian business magazine in 2017 which was dominated by men because of the 30 best CEOs in Indonesia, the

number of women was only 3 out of 30 people or only about 10% of the list, Dian Siswarini as CEO of XL Axiata Tbk, Atiek Nur Wahyuni as CEO of Trans Corp and Marlina Hayati Goestam as CEO of Darya Varia Laboratoria Tbk, This number is certainly very little for women who occupy the highest position in a career.

The sticky floor phenomenon itself may be very close to us but there are still many people who have not realized that they are trapped in this phenomenon. Although this phenomenon has been explained by Shambaugh in his book "It's Not Glass Ceiling, It's Sticky Floor: Free Yourself Behavior Sabotaging Your Career Success", but the research was carried out in western countries with different cultural characteristics and even eastern countries[8]. Other than that in other studies [6],[9],[10] and most of the studies used quantitative methods so that they ignored whether there were other causes within women which caused them to be trapped in sticky floor phenomena. Thus, more in-depth research is needed on this phenomenon.

## II. Literature Review

### 1. The Role of Women

Indonesian women, still close and bound by the shackles of a patriarchal culture that she had received from childhood to adulthood. Although women's gender discrimination in education participation and the labor market has been greatly reduced or even reversed, women who occupy the highest positions tend to be less. In addition to the factors of patriarchal culture, the women's point of view who consider men is a person who is fully responsible for earning a living for her family [11] making many women restrained on the assumption that a woman works not with demands to fulfill her family's needs but is limited to finding the money for herself so that women do not have a strong motivation in a career. In addition, according to research from Hofsted [12], the role of women is indeed required to be a good mother and wife and to spend more time at home so that they will have a less active role in the public. And this understanding has been planted in the minds of every woman in the culture taught by her family.

### 2. Sticky Floor Phenomenon

Sticky Floor is an invisible obstacle but prevents women from promotion to executive positions and receives compensation similar to men [13] even though it works in the same place as men [14]. This phenomenon runs systematically and is a form of poor career planning until creating a barrier to their own success[15]. The term sticky floor first appeared in 1992, sparked by the Sociologist Catherine White Berheide, she created a metaphor to describe the difficulties of women who are still in a position of low salary and low status in the government [5] and published in the New York Times [16]. These sociologists use sticky floor images or sticky floor phenomena to refer to discriminatory practices that slow women's progress, including occupational segregation practices that place women in dead-end jobs, underpaid workers in predominantly female jobs, and lack of flexibility and absence of work ladder in this matter [17].

Sticky floor in the definition of some experts is an obstacle that refers to poor career planning to create a barrier to their own success[8]. Sticky floor is a barrier that women face much earlier in their career path [5]. Sticky floor is an obstacle in the beginning of a career that keeps women from moving forward [9]. So for a conclude from some experts sticky floor is an obstacle at the beginning of a career that creates a barrier for itself to move forward. This definition will be used as a reference in this study.

### 3. Factors Causing The Emergence of Sticky Floor Phenomenon

Based on the research that has been done on sticky floor phenomenon, there are several factors that cause sticky floor, namely work / life balance, culture, gender stereotypes, and education that are still low. [8][9][5][18][19][20][21][22]. (Figur 1)

1. Work/Life Balance	2. Gender Stereotypes
3. Culture	4. Education That is Still Low

Fig. 1. Factors Causing the Occurrence of Sticky Floor

Source :<sup>1,2,4</sup> Shambaugh, <sup>2,3</sup> Deschacht, <sup>2</sup> Charlie, <sup>2,4</sup> Boot, <sup>1,2,3</sup> Kee, <sup>3,4</sup> Baker, <sup>2</sup> Naseer, <sup>1,2,4</sup> HRM International Digest

Work / Life balance is the factor that most causes the sticky floor to arise in women. For a woman, of course family is the highest priority. So it is very difficult for a woman to choose and balance her family or career because women are workers in the house who take care of the family [23]. Especially in the minds of every woman who wants to be a good mother for her children, but on the other hand she also wants to be a good and accomplished worker [24]. Not only that, there are several reasons that make women who finally decide to choose family compared to their careers.

- Women who work will spend more time in the office, so their responsibilities are less for the family.
- Work environment that is less comfortable for a woman.
- Lack of support from leaders and companies for female workers.

Until finally many women are very difficult to be able to balance their careers and family.

Whereas cultural factors that cause sticky floors arise because Indonesia, which has 300 ethnic groups, certainly has their own culture that has been planted since childhood. According to Koentjaraningrat [25], his own culture is the whole idea and work of man who must be accustomed to learning along with the whole result of his mind. Especially in Indonesia the patriarchal culture is still inherent. Definition of Patriarchy is a system of grouping social communities that are concerned with the lineage of father / men. Patriarchy can also be explained where the state of society places male position on higher position than women in all aspects of social, cultural and economic life [26] So that it is not polite if the wife's position in household is higher than her husband.

In the gender stereotyping factor that causes the sticky floor to emerge, the concept of culture is used to distinguish the roles, behaviors, mentalities, and emotional characteristics between men and women that develop in society. According to Schmitt [27] women have emotional, subjective, passive, lacking in self-confidence, lack of independence, etc. while men have almost the opposite nature of women such as not emotional, confident, not easy to be influenced, tough and so

forth. So that women feel that they are not very suitable to lead

Meanwhile, the education factor which is still low which affects the emergence of sticky floor still has a relationship with gender stereotypes because there are still many people who think that women's duties are enough at home, there are still many women whose education has stopped. Although the BPS data stated that 31.96% of women could no longer continue their education to a much higher level, 31.18% for boys. This difference is actually not too far away only by 0.08% between men and women but the women are still below men. Because of this many companies ultimately prefer to promote men over women [28]

### III. Method

This study uses qualitative methods with a case study approach, in which this paper is used as a model that focuses on how researchers can explore a limited system (bounded system) in a case or even more supported by searching data in detail and depth which involves various kinds of information sources [29].

This study took the subject of research from women who worked in two different institutions namely in the banking and government fields. The research subjects were selected by a purposive method based on working time of at least 3 years, unmarried women, married women who did not have children, and married women and have children. The object of research experiences during a career in women and how to make a choice in his career choice. The researcher collects data through three ways, namely: a) in-depth interviews, b) documentation, c) literature study. Validation of research data using triangulation technique. The research locations are carried out in the banking sector and government sector.

### IV. Result

At this time also many women have jumped into the world of work and they work namely to increase income, avoid boredom in filling their spare time, have certain skills that want to be used, obtain status, and develop themselves. As indicated by Aurel:

*(...)because before marriage I had worked and was used to work, when I was married I didn't work for 1 year and very bored so the desire to work really strong. Besides being able to help the family economy, household needs can be fulfilled by me and my husband, and then can be an independent woman, because basically the needs of women are more than men (...), Work is the same as learning and practicing skills that I have, and yes work it's the same as learning (learning to manage time, learning when training or managing strategies. Like strategies in work or strategies in the life of the household. "*

(Aurel, banking is married and has children)

The same thing was stated by all informants, who worked in the banking sector as well as in the government, so that women worked not only to help their husbands to fulfill their economic needs but also as a means for women to develop themselves, as a means of women to apply the knowledge they had acquired. So that working for women is not to make a living but only help a husband in the family economy

#### a. Work/Life Balance

Being a woman who works is not an easy thing even though at this time many women have left their homes for work. But the step of a woman who steps into a career ladder is not easy, women still have to face challenges in their careers especially when women are married and have husbands or even children so the focus of women will be divided and women will be faced with a dilemma because women who are married are certainly women it has other responsibilities besides workers but also a wife and a mother, but in another case the woman is still a worker in the office where she works

But apart from all that for women, if indeed they have to choose between family and work, of course women will choose their families, especially if at that time the family needs her. This is as expressed by Jasmine :

*there I see first, what's the problem in the family? If the reason really has to be, I have to stop working and take care of my family. I would prefer for choosing a family. "*

(Jasmine, banking is married do not have children)

Working women certainly need support especially from the family because the family is also a support system for women. Both women who are unmarried, married and already have children have families who always support them in her career. The forms of support provided are certainly various, like giving a wife's permission to work is also a form of family support for a working woman but in addition, many other supports, both emotional, moral and spiritual support, and even small support such as to take work and to pick up after work became very meaningful for a woman as expressed by Kezia:

*They understood that his mother could not continue with him. So ... e ... it's support from children if the support from my husband is yes, hmm, I am allowed to go out even if for example to the head office or to another region. "*

(Kezia, PNS is married and have children)

Sharing responsibility between family and work does not always for a women who have worked and have children, but for women who are still single it is still necessary to have responsibility too for this matter because the family is not always husband and child, but father, mother, sister and brother is also a family that must be balanced by women. Balancing the family means sharing responsibility fairly so that the woman can become a professional worker in her office but also does not leave her responsibilities as a child, wife or mother. As expressed by Vanilla :

*If there is a holiday, we gether together on Saturday, if now my younger sibling, already working or even someone who has a family, so for replacement now is nephew. So, basically, if it's Saturday or Sunday, but not every week we always go to some place together with our nephews and sisters. So I'm still have a time for my family.*

(Vanilla, single PNS)

From the opinions expressed by the informants, for a woman worker where they have to work from Monday to Friday, and only have holiday in Saturday-Sunday they will take advantage of Saturday-Sunday as well as possible to gather with family or vacation together. From the researcher's point of view, this is done so that women can be

easier in dividing their focus and not mixed up, so that for weekday, Monday-Friday they will focus more on their work while for weekends Saturday and Sunday they will focus on quality time or gathering with their families without must be disturbed by his work.

#### b. Culture

Strongly embedded culture is when women are in line with their destiny namely they are married, giving birth, and caring for their children but along with the times, women are encouraged to be independent. In addition, women also do not agree if women's lives are only related to domestic affairs, such as the opinion expressed by Kezia :

*yes, so anyone is in phase whenever the woman can't stay at home. He definitely ... must have the opportunity to leave the house, at least he must go out to ee ... this ... develops his competence. You can learn. For example, if the Muslims join the disscusion about religion in mosque. It's also an opportunity that must still be taken. Because, if we're just at home, we don't develop. There are also many sciences that are outside "*

*(Kezia, PNS is married and have children)*

From the opinions expressed by Kezia and other informants, it can be interpreted that women are not only restricted in the house, but that women must not always stay at home even though Javanese women are always synonymous with patriarchal culture that requires women to be in second place compared to men but if women can pursue their careers without abandoning their families, why not?

However, all married respondents agreed that work for them no longer for fulfilling their basic needs, as Jasmine and Kezia also said, because for women who already had husbands, if it is in accordance with the culture they hold since childhood that men would fulfill all their needs after got married (Koentjaraningrat , 1994) but this only applies to women who are married or already have a husband because his life will be borne by her husband but not all married women can get that ideal condition. For Vanila and Cristina as a single woman who is still young, working is to fulfill the necessities of life as the main thing, a place to learn new things, find experiences, and develop the

abilities that they already have to meet their own needs.

This is also related to their perspective for promotion they get in work, but in this case the three groups of women who become informants have different answers regarding the promotion that is obtained from the company, if for single women promotion is a tantalizing thing because it is related to income the greater the results, while for women who are married and do not have children they will take promotions that come to him if indeed their husbands allow, while for women who are married and have their children, they don't pursue high career levels so that if there is a promotion they will consider family and prefer to give up promotion if they have to sacrifice their family.

In this study researchers can also conclude that sticky floor originating from culture will be increasingly felt when women are married and have children because there are other obligations that they have to do besides obligations in the office. The response from the informants' for point of view if there is a promotion in line with the informants answers when faced with the situation if their husbands asked to leave their jobs for informants who already had their children gladly to leave their work because if indeed the husband had said that there would be things to do so the wife is not allowed to work anymore.

*I will obey what the husband said. Because of my husband's blessing is the blessing of Allah. Allah will not reduce our sustenance, if we follow what the husband commands. While it's good and in His way.*

*(Aurel, Banking married to have children)*

Whereas for married informants who do not have children, they will try more and ask why they should stop working, how emergency the situation is so that they have to stop working and if there is a very emergency situation and strong reasons they will stop working while women those who are single they will be very hard for stop working and trying to keep working even though there is indeed a very urgent need that they still choose to change jobs or think about other plans but in the context they still work and do not stop.

#### c. Gender Stereotypes

Women and men certainly have their own positive and negative traits. And for women themselves have some positive traits such as women are multitasking, strong, more painstaking, more thorough

*The positive thing is that women are multitasking and even a housewife can take care of a child while washing while mopping it, so multitasking and the focus can be divided so much on her mind, if men are usually according to research only focus on one thing yes, so if he is working on one job then it can't be handling other job so a man cant multitasking if women can more multitasking at work*

*(Cristina, Single Banking)*

But women also have negative traits that cannot be avoided such as character women who are moodswing, use more feelings and overall informants mention these two characteristics that stand out the most from the negative nature of women.

With the unique differences in the nature of women and men it certainly influences the leadership of women and men. Although women have positive traits that are more powerful and even multitasking, for all informants, men are far more suitable to lead than women, because men who have more stable emotional traits can focus more on making men feel more suitable to lead.

*(...) Men, because women leaders sometimes cannot separate personal and work interests, then not to the point. Not to mention unexpected mood changes sometimes affect his attitude with subordinates and are more sensitive or easily offended.*

*(Aurel, Banking is married to have children)*

These things contribute to gender stereotypes that men are more suitable to lead than women, although there are many good female leaders, but the numbers are still very small compared to men because there are still very few women who can reduce their negative traits so they can be more professional at work.

#### d. Education That is Still Low

Education is important for both women and men. For women education is not only for themselves but also for their children because their children's first education is from their mother. Women are also required to attend a higher education because women's affairs are not only about the kitchen, and almost all informants agree that women are required to go to higher education.

*That woman must be smart. Any. Anything smart. At least she can be an educator for her children and it can't carelessly educate those children. there must be knowledge. In fact, in my opinion, women should be smarter than men.*

*(Kezia, PNS married to have children)*

Education for women is also useful for supporting her career because at present almost all government and private companies make education important. As stated by Aurel that high education can help the promotion of an employee especially if the employee also has good performance.

*a relationship with the promotion of the company, because the higher the education will be faster to promote, especially coupled with good performance and a education that is always implemented in work or daily life. And usually in a company, education is the most important consideration*

*(Aurel, Banking is married to have children)*

So researcher can conclude that highly educated women are necessary because the education can help promote their position, and besides that it is useful for themselves and their families. At present the company encourages its workers to get high education for both women and men. Because human resources can be said to be the company's most important asset, the company's wheel drive aseat. Even though the company has sophisticated tools but the company still needs human resources as a driver, regulator, and as the brain of sophisticated tools, it is impossible for a company to move without humans in it.

The company also seeks to maximize the potential that exists in its employees, one of which is through education because educated employees will help companies to develop and advance so that the company also encourages both female and male employees to get education fairly as Vanilla said :

*Very supportive even here there are also scholarships to S2 and there are training programs to add soft skills too.*

(Vanilla, single PNS)

From the answers of Vanilla and other informants, it can be interpreted that both government and banking organizations strongly support their employees to get the highest education, and even provide scholarships to continue their education if indeed the employee achieves. Because education can be one way to get a promotion in addition to other factors, so education is needed evenly. So that all respondents agreed that higher education for women was needed.

## V. Conclusion

The sticky floor phenomenon will be increasingly felt when women are at the highest level, namely marrying and having a baby because women are very close to role conflict which makes it easier for them to sacrifice their careers if they feel that they are not comparable to what they sacrificed to their families especially towards their baby so that women have very low motivation to lead. All informants considered that all decisions made in his career were his own and without coercion so that they did not feel any obstacles in his career.

The naming of the Sticky Floor phenomenon in Indonesia cannot be done because women choose their own way very consciously with their views on religion, culture, norms and social values that are around them so that this cannot be equated with thinking in the West which makes sticky floor an obstacle.

## References

- [1] U. S. B. of L. Statistics, "Women in The Labor Force: a Databook," 2013. .
- [2] W. Arulampalam *et al.*, "Is There a Glass Ceiling over Europe ? Exploring the Gender Pay Gap across the Wage Distribution Stable URL : <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25249069> vol. 60, no. 2, pp. 163–186, 2007.
- [3] C. Olivetti and B. Petrongolo, "Unequal Pay or Unequal Employment? A Cross-Country Analysis of Gender Gaps," *J. Labor Econ.*, vol. 26, no. 4, pp. 621–654, 2008.
- [4] W. E. Forum, "The Global Gender Gap Report 2014," Geneva, 2014.
- [5] L. L. Carli and A. Eagly, "Women Face a Labyrinth : an Examination of Metaphors for Women Leaders," 2016.
- [6] D. Bjerk, "Glass ceilings or sticky floors? Statistical discrimination in a dynamic model of hiring and promotion," *Econ. J.*, vol. 118, no. 530, pp. 961–982, 2008.
- [7] A. . Sorkin, "Women in a man's world.," *New York Times*. .
- [8] R. Shambaugh, *It's not a Glass Ceiling, It's a Sticky Floor*. United State: McGraw-Hill, 2008.
- [9] N. Deschacht, A. S. De Pauw, and S. Baert, "Do gender differences in career aspirations contribute to sticky floors?," *Int. J. Manpow.*, vol. 38, no. 4, pp. 580–593, 2017.
- [10] P. Carrillo, N. Gandelman, and V. Robano, "Sticky floors and glass ceilings in Latin America," *J. Econ. Inequal.*, vol. 12, no. 3, pp. 339–361, 2014.
- [11] L. D. Oktavia, "Canting by Arswendo Atmowiloto : The Potrayal of Javanese Patriarchy and Women's Challenge Toward The Patriarchal System.," Universitas Kristen satya Wacana, 2012.
- [12] G. Hofstede and H. Bond, M, "The Confucius Connection : From Cultural Roots to Economic Growth," *Organ. Din.*, 1988.
- [13] A. Hejase and A. Dah, "An Assessment of the Impact of Sticky Floors and Glass Ceilings in Lebanon," *Procedia - Soc. Behav. Sci.*, vol. 109, no. 2012, pp. 954–964, 2014.
- [14] C. Johnson, J. Long, and S. Faught, "The Need to Practice What We Teach: The Sticky Floor Effect in Colleges of Business in Southern US Universities."
- [15] N. J. Adler, "An International Perspective on the Barriers to the Advancement of Women Managers," *Appl. Psychol.*, vol. 42, no. 4, pp. 289–300, 1993.
- [16] B. P. Noble, "At work; and now the "sticky floor.," *New York Times*, 1992. .
- [17] S. L. Harlan and C. W. Berheide, "Barriers to Work Place Advancement Experienced by Women in Low-Paying Occupations.,"

- Washington, DC: U. S. Glass Ceiling Commission., 1994. .
- [18] A. L. Booth, M. Francesconi, and J. Frank, "A sticky floors model of promotion, pay, and gender," *Eur. Econ. Rev.*, vol. 47, no. 2, pp. 295–322, 2003.
- [19] H. J. Kee, "Glass ceiling or sticky floor? Exploring the Australian gender pay gap," *Econ. Rec.*, vol. 82, no. 259, pp. 408–427, 2006.
- [20] J. G. Baker, "Glass ceilings or sticky floors? A model of high-income law graduates," *J. Labor Res.*, vol. 24, no. 4, pp. 695–711, 2003.
- [21] M. Ahmad and H. Naseer, "Gender Bias at Workplace: Through Sticky Floor and Glass Ceiling: A Comparative Study of Private and Public Organizations of Islamabad," *Int. J. Manag. Bus. Res.*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 249–260, 2015.
- [22] "Metaphors of women as leaders: Between the sticky floor and the glass ceiling," *Hum. Resour. Manag. Int. Dig.*, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 11–12, 2017.
- [23] A. Park, C. Bryson, E. Clery, J. Curtice, and M. Phillips, *British Social Attitudes: the 30th Report*. London: NatCen Social Research, 2013.
- [24] N. M. Noor, "Work-Family Conflict , Work- and Family- Role Salience , and Women ' s Well-Being," *J. Soc. Psychol.*, vol. 144, no. 4, pp. 389–405, 2004.
- [25] Koentjaraningrat, *Kebudayaan Jawa*. Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1994.
- [26] N. Nurmila, "Pengaruh Budaya Patriarki Terhadap Pemahaman Agama dan Pembentukan Budaya," *J. Karsa*, vol. 23, no. 105, pp. 1–16, 2015.
- [27] D. P. Schmitt, A. E. Long, A. McPhearson, K. O'Brien, B. Remmert, and S. H. Shah, "Personality and gender differences in global perspective," *Int. J. Psychol.*, vol. 52, pp. 45–56, 2017.
- [28] B. D. M. Djasmoredjo, "Persepsi Karyawan Laki-Laki terhdap Pemimpin Perempuan : Apakah Pemimpin Perempuan Lebih Bersifat Aneh Daripada Pemimpin Laki-Laki ?," *J. Widya Manaemen Akuntansi*, vol. Vol 4, No., 2004.
- [29] J. W. Creswell, *Penelitian Kualitatif & Desain Riset*, Cetakan 1. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Belajar, 2015.